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Using questionnaire responses from 24 out of 25 area extension agents, this Ohio Cooperative Extension Service study investigated the number and kind of area extension program development committees currently organized or used by these agents, the number of committees planned for future use, the structure and functions of the committees, how agents were using the committees, and reasons for use or nonuse. Findings included the following: (1) the agents are using, or planning to use, committees for program development; (2) agents look to committees for most help in identifying problems and determining broad objectives; (3) they consider committees somewhat helpful in program evaluation and least helpful in implementation; (4) they see influential agricultural producers and representatives as active committee members along with selected agents; (5) most favor using county extension agents on committees and feel strongly that coordination and liaison with county programs is extremely important; (6) agents favor geographical distribution of committee members throughout the area served while limiting committee size to about 15 members. One major suggestion was for detailed inservice training in ways of working effectively with committees. (ly)

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# PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE USAGE BY AREA EXTENSION AGENTS IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES

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## INTRODUCTION

Significant r anization of the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service with accompanying form ion of eight Area Extension Centers, became effective January 1, 1965. The eight Area Centers opened at that time, were planned to serve 56 of the 88 Ohio Counties. Further reorganization occurred January 1, 1968, increasing the number of counties per Area Center, and expanding the number of Area Centers to ten, thus providing coverage for the entire state. Throughout the three year perood, Area Extension Agents have been encouraged to use committees in program development. Highly structured, formally organized committees were not required. Emphasis was placed on securing industry-wide representation for ideas and program direction.

## OBJECTIVES

The purposes of this study were:

To determine the number and kind of Area Extension Program Development committees currently organized or utilized by Area Extension Agents in the several agricultural industry areas.

To determine the number of Area Extension Program Development committees planned for future use by Area Extension Agents in the agricultural industry areas.

To determine the structure of program development committees.

To determine the functions of program development committees.

To determine how the committees are being utilized by Area Extension Agents.

To determine reasons Area Extension Agents were or were not using program development committees in the agricultural industries.

It was determined to be important to conduct a study of this type, to gain a total view of the current status of committee usage by Area Agents. The potential for preparation of suggested guides and recommendations for the future, was recognized as further justification and purpose for the study. It was made clear to the agents that the purpose was in gaining a complete report on committee usage, and was not an appraisal of personnel, based on existing use of committees.

## METHODOLOGY

The purposes of the study were generally established in consultation with Associate Director Kirby and Dr. Clarence Cunningham. A questionnaire was designed to secure what was felt to be minimal pertinent information. Emphasis was placed on securing information on the composition and use of committees, and the specific reasons for the various alternatives and choices of the agents. Because of the small number of persons in the group to be surveyed, it was agreed that every effort be made to have each potential respondent complete the questionnaire. As an incentive to gain the proper attention of hhe Area Extension Agents, a letter of transmittal, signed by the appropriate District Supervisor, accompanied each questionnaire mailed.

The data on the completed questionnaires were grouped for tabulation on the basis of the field of specialization of the respondents. Following are the groups with the number of agents in each group:

| | |
|---|---|
| Area Extension Agent, Agronomy | 5 agents |
| Area Extension Agent, Animal Industry | 7 agents |
| Area Extension Agent, Farm Management | 8 agents |
| Area Extension Agent, other: one in Marketing, one in Poultry, one in Horticulture, and two in Dairy | 5 agents |

The responses were grouped for the summary with some minor paraphasing done where respondents in two or more groups made similar statements identified with their field of specialization.

## FINDINGS

The respondents' answers indicated careful thought and analysis of their respective position and the questions. Of the potential twenty-five agents in the group surveyed, all but one completed the questionnaire in time to be included in the summary. Instead of having responses from seven Area Extension Agents, Animal Industry, only six appear in the study, due to the one not responding. Because of the very nature of the study, we had expected response from a majority of the agents. An analysis proceeds through each question and phase of the survey.

### DO YOU HAVE ONE OR MORE AREA PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES?

Fifteen of the 24 respondents indicated they now had at least one program committee, and seven of the fifteen indicated sixteen additional committees for a total of 31. One Animal Industry Agent reported working with seven specific committees within the area, three for livestock species, and four for the individual feeder pig sales. Three of the five agents in the "Other" category reported working with three committees each.

#### What Subject Matter Areas?

This sub-question drew responses encompassing the subject matter areas of the respondents with a predominance of industry-wide committees. The Agronomy Agents reported two Agronomy Industry Committees, a Sugar Beet Institute Committee, and

a Lime and Fertilizer Dealer Training Committee. The Animal Industry Agents reported two Beef Committees, two Sheep Committees, three Swine Committees, four Feeder Pig Committees, and one Lamb Production Committee. Farm Management Agents reported four Farm Management Committees, and one Farm Manpower Committee. The agents grouped in the "Others" category, reported three Poultry Committees, one in Landscape Horticulture, and one each in Grain Elevator Marketing, Roadside Markets, Fruit Marketing, Dairy Industry, Graded Dairy Sale, and Dairy Tour (ad hoc).

If you do not now have a committee, do you plan within the next year to organize such a committee? This question drew an additional eight affirmative answers.

If you do not have a committee projected for the next year, is there some date anticipated further in the future? This question received an affirmative response from one agent, thereby giving indication of the intent of all the agents to use a program development committee.

What are the reasons for the decisions above? A variety of interesting responses appeared favoring the committees. The following would be typical:

> I believe that an area committee will be the most effective way to establish that needs and to determine the wants of the people I'm trying to serve.
>
> A committee would assit in identifying main problem areas. The committees would decide what in-depth schools should be conducted. The committee could help evaluate present programs, and suggest ways to strengthen it. It would assist with promoting and conducting the area program.

To keep some key farmers and agricultural leaders in the counties, informed about the area programs and involve them in the developmental processes of future programs.

Some reasons indicated for not having an area-wide general program development or industry committee also appeared as follows:

I feel there are other good ways to get program direction without having a formal committee. The type of responsibility we can give a committee will not maintain committee interest. There is no need to duplicate committee meetings and functions as county committees can give us both an overview of problems and identify problems unique to the county. Because program committees have had limited success on the county level, does not mean we can use them successfully on the area level with farmers. We can use the committees with industry. We need to look at new ways to get people involved in program development without having to have a committee meeting. Actually, agents have an opportunity tc work on program development whenever they meet with any individual or group.

## ORGANIZATION OF AREA PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

### Who Should be on the Area Committees, How Many Persons, What Interests Should They Represent, and What Geographical Distribution of Committee Membership Should be Sought?

There was considerable agreement on the various aspects of answering this composite question. Committee size suggestions ranged from 5 to 30, with eleven agents suggesting between 10 and 15. A few agents suggested size based on distribution per county, with two or three per county being the most common suggestions. The interests to be represented include appropriate producers, industry

personnel from supply, sales, service, financial, and marketing firms plus Extension personnel. Emphasis was placed on having the producers representative of the area with a minimum from each county. Industry representation is generally reported as an "At Large" approach, although some have devised systems for naming service people from one or two counties, sales representatives from other counties with other industry personnel distributed so that every county may have one industry representative.

## ROLE OF COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS ON PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

What is Your Feeling About County Extension Agents Serving on the Area Program

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| As active members? | Yes | 20 | No | - | No Answer | 4 |
| As ex-officio member? | Yes | 5 | No | 7 | No Answer | 12 |
| To provide liason with county programs? | Yes | 17 | No | 2 | No Answer | 5 |

What are Your Reasons for the Above Answers?

They should be involved in the development of the area program. There must also be a coordination of county programs with area programs as well as date scheduling to avoid conflicts. They should have many good ideas about program needs and methods, plus knowing good locations and physical facilities for meetings. It would help to coordinate the total extension program instead of some people getting the ideas that something is area, and something else is county. Several agents should be members of these committees to insure that the agents' opinions can be injected into the discussion. The agent membership should be limited to allow full participation of the remaining committee members. Involvment of County Agents in this stage of program planning should help make them feel a part of the program, and have some responsibility for its' a must to have

County Agents on the committee to provide liason between the county and area - County Agents can make or break an area program. "County Agents are needed to fill the communication gap between area and county committees". At least one person who felt the County Agent should not provide liason with county programs made this point: the lay members should serve as liason with county programs.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AREA AND COUNTY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

Would you see a Gradual Strengthening of the Area Committee with Increasing Respnnsibility?

Yes 15 No 7 No Answer 2

Would you see a Lessening of Responsibility in Program Development for the County Committee?

Yes 5 No 17 No Answer 2

If your answer to either part of this question is yes, in what ways

Persons answering yes to both questions, made these comments: The area committee, if practical, can develop a better picture of the industry in terms of markets, production and problems. Many people think in terms of the commodity or aciivity and disregard county lines. It will become increasingly difficult for county committees to make sound decisions on programs and not just county programs, they should become more active and assume more responsibility.

Persons responding YES to the first part of the question, and NO to the second part, made these comments: Responsibility will be mainly program planning and support. If the committee is given responsibilities and direction in program determination, implementation and evaluation, then they are more likely to feel the program is their program. By providing or making available materials for demonstrations, Area programs could be developed and area programs could assist in achieving these goals.

One person responded No to both parts of the question, and had this to suggest: The county committee and/or the agent must be strong - or the program in the county will be weak.

Is it Possible or Practical that the County Committee in your Subject Matter Area Might Assist in the Area Program? In Program Determination? and in Program Implementation?

The answers to these subquestions were identical:

Yes 21 No 1 No Answer 2

Give Some Examples of how

Assist area committees by providing information on county problems, interests, and needs.

Assist area committee with program promotion.

County committee can act as sponsors, collect fees, etc. for meetings and schools.

Chairmen of county committees could do a good job on Area Committee.

Encourage County Agent to take an active part in the area program.

Identify Some Functions that Might be Performed or Conducted

By Area Committee:

Determine program needs and problems.

Informal evaluation of program.

General program direction.

Carry out programs of interest to two or more counties.

Guidance for long range Extension programs and for immediate or annual programs.

By County Committees:

Arrange for meeting places, tour stops, and demonstrations.

Specific problems unique to the county.

Program emphasis and suggestions

Conducting of events.

Help with local facilities and program details.

Dovetail county and area work into one package.

Promotion of area activities to be conducted in that county.

This statement was mentioned most often as being an important function.

One agent made the following notation. "Maybe some representation should exist on area committees, from county committee, as least a line of communication between county committees and area committees needs to exist. County committees can also be helpful in identifying needs and in evaluating". These are good comments and are more interesting in the light of another comment on the same questionnaire, which indicated, "There are no county committees at present in my subject area".

<u>What Specific Responsibilities do you see Area Committees Assuming Leadership For, or Assisting With, in each of the Following Five Categories?</u>

To the right, describe their involvement in each category. To the left, rank the five functions according to your opinion of the most important (1) to least important (5) contribution of the area committee to these steps in the program development process.

Studying the situation.

Identifying problems.

Determing objectives.

Program implementation.

Program evaluation.

In ranking the five functions, recognize as parts of the program development process, in terms of the contribution made by the area committee relating to these steps, there was remarkable agreement in the total responses. From most to least important, the ratings were: Identifying problems, studying the situation, determing objectives, program evaluation, and program implementation. Calculation of a Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance, on the repsonses indicated that the odds were less than one in a thousand of the specific rating occuring strictly as a result of chance. Thus, it is likely that the responses were based on some commonality of experience and opinion.

Comments on the involvement of the committees in the various functions include the following:

Studying the situation

Identify needs within the area

County and Area Agents will need to summarize data.

Someone else needs to do most of the legwork to make the suudy and present results for the committee to evaluate.

Helpful in relating local information.

Appraise local situation - get facts, must be informed to be effective.

Identifying problems

The producer is the only person who can define the problem.

They have first hand knowledge and experience here as a group represent a typical segment of the industry.

Committee members may see the total program from a different light than we do, thus may pose problems which we do not know exist.

Committee can take their ideas and link with the situation to identify problems.

Program implementation

Members can promote planned programs in home counties.

Area committee will do little here, and only on broad basis.

Give time to help arrange for and conduct area programs held in their locale.

Helpful in promotion, publicity, and participation.

Program evaluation

This is a very important function, determining what may have been wrong or right about past programs as plans are made for the future.

Can help evaluate as a group, but most evaluate in terms of their own enterprise rather than as an industry.

The area committee should have the repoonsibility to determine how well the program meets the needs.

Can be especially helpful in informal evaluation of program, through their contact with local people.

Whatever is done needs to be evaluated....need to determine if what was done, accomplished what it was supposed to do.

## FREQUENCY OF AREA PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

How Often Should the Area Committee Meet?

Suggestions ranged from annually to quarterly, with over hald the agents suggesting meeting once or twice a year. One agent in a negative vein, suggested that it was physically impossible to meet more than twice a year, which is not enough to be of value. A number of comments made reference to meeting when there was a job to do, or often enough to carry out the purposes.

Do you feel that lay Committee Members Object to the time and Travel of Performing on an Area Level?

Nine responsed YES to this question, 13 said NO, and two did not answer. Many responses were recorded for this question, explaining or interpreting the answers given. Several examples follow:

Not if held to a minimum, or if you don't hold too many.

If they see their ideas used they don't object.

Not if they feel thay have a part in the program.

Not if you listen to what they say.

They do object to attending meetings to hear reports.

With committees covering nine counties, they object.

Yes, in this area of the state.

Yes, if you meet more than once or twice a year.

Are there Reasons to Expect Area Committees To Perform Different Tasks than Would be Expected at the County Level?

Yes 13 No 8 No Answer 3

What reasons and why?

Several answers supported reasons for being different.

They are covering the total area and are not as familiar with local situation and needs.

Because of the limitations of time and travel, they should not be expected to help much beyond program study and determination.

Area committee people will be from upper strata of the specific interest.

They will have less time to give.

Loyality to county is stronger than for the area and state, so I would not expect the area committee to help as much in actual work.

Few responses were gained from those who answered the questions NO, but a couple of answers are significant.

Every committee should be continually studying, identifying problems, setting goals, implementing programs, and evaluating their efforts, regardless of size of area served.

An area committee member is looking at a broader picture than a county member, this may change his attitude on certain issues or problems within this county.

## EVALUATION OF COMMITTEE INFLUENCES

### How does an Area Committee Really Help you most?

By serving as another channel from which to draw information relative to program direction and acceptance of past programs.

Identify problems and offer suggestions to assist in correcting them.

Implementation of programs following careful study and county committee meetings to discuss problems.

In determining program emphasis and in support.

They report on the trends, identify problems in the industry and are able to lead the industry into the area program approach.

Legitimize my efforts, study situation, decide on plans, and evaluate the results.

### How does an Area Committee Hinder you in your Efforts?

Requires more time in organization and in communications to keep all informed on activities, and in reporting back to them on developments.

They can feel they have the final word on what will or will not happen.

It just takes time on their parts, and on my part to get ready and present the program to them for their ideas and suggestions.

I am concerned about getting their ideas implemented after the ideas are tempered by County and Area agent planning sessions.

Of the sixteen agents giving specific answers to this question, eleven responded that there had been no hindrance at this point in time.

## STATUS AND RELATIONSHIP WITH COUNTY COMMITTEES

### How Many of the Counties you Serve Maintain a County Committee in your area of Subject Matter?

Seven of the eight Farm Management Agents reported there were no county committees in their areas. One agent indicated he didn't know. One also commented that he doubted that there would ever be specific county farm management committees. Most Animal Industry Agents reported some committees by species in the counties. One agent indicated two of seven counties have active committees - the others have committees but they are not so active.

Agronomy Agents reported a variety of committees in the counties with some counties functioning with an agronomy program under the guidance of an Animal Science or Dairy committee.

Agents in the category of "Other" indicated county committees for every county as in Dairy, down to none for areas of specialized horticulture and for specific aspects of marketing.

Do you have any Responsibilities with these County Committees?

Yes 9 No 12 No Answer 3

What Responsibilities?

Several agents responded that they had met to serve as a resource person and to assist with program planning. One reported that he works closely with a county committee as the only Extension agent working with them. Another indicated meeting with Extension Advisory Committees and subject matter committee in studying the situation and identifying major problem areas in most cases.

Should you have a Responsibility, or Would you like to have a Responsibility?

Yes 9 No 11 No Answer 4

In What way or What Responsibility?

To coordinate county and area programs.

Assist with program or event planning.

As a resource person on request.

To gain ideas for total educational effort.

Are there ways you Would like to use these County Committees, but do not Feel Free to do so?

Yes 9 No 11 No Answer 4

How Would you like to use them?

I could assist with specific enterprise committees such as dairy, animal science, and agronomy, along farm management lines as it concerns these various committees.

I would like to use them as a sounding board for local areas of concern as a basis for program determination.

To gain ideas for county and area program, aid in implementing programs.

Problem identification, to report trends and market situations. To gain their support as promoters of programs and in public relations for the area program.

I feel free to ask the agent for time, but I haven't done this because there just isn't enough time.

## SUMMARY

Area Extension Agents currently employed in the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service, either are utilizing committees for program development purposes or have plans for organizing and using committees in the foreseeable future. These agents look to the committees for most help in identifying problems, studying the situation, and determing broad objectives. They feel the committees are somewhat helpful in program evaluation, and of least help in program implementation. They do feel, however, that a committeeman may be helpful in his home community in making arrangements for area meetings, and that every committeeman can be helpful in promotion of planned activities. There is also evidence of a feeling that where county committees exist within a field of subject matter, that they too, may be helpful with local arrangements, promotion, and at times with problem identification.

The Area Agents see influential producers and representatives of the industry, as active committee representatives along with selected County Extension Agents. Over 80% of the respondents favored utilizing County Extension Agents on the committees, and expressed strong feelings that coordination and liason with county programs was extremely important. The Area Agents further indicated preference for geographical distribution of committee members throughout the area served, and yet, generally keeping the committee size somewhere near fifteen members or about two per county. A few agents expressed concern for the time and travel of committee members on an area basis, and several indicated the need for meaningful and worthwhile committee meetings where the commiteee members could be actively involved, and where they would feel that they were making a contribution.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

It is apparent from the kinds of answers provided on the questionnaires, that all agents are not at the same place in terms of experience and capability of working with committees in program development. It would appear that some are masters at working with and through people to accomplish organizational goals. Some comprehend the program development process very well, and have adapted techniques to fit their knowledge and the somewhat different task of formulating programs on an area basis. Some could gain from educational training in the program development process. A detailed in-service training program on methods and techniques of effectively working with committees could be extremely beneficial. From the answers given, one could almost prepare a continuum ranging from the person who is hesitant and unsure of himself, to the confident, aggressive individual that knows what he wants from a committee, and how to get the job done smoothly and efficiently.

It would not be reasonable at this time to recommend that everyone who does not now have a committee, rush out to organize one. Nor would it be appropriate to suggest that any be disbanded immediately. It would appear that sharpening of sk skills and abilities of working with and through people (committees), could make the program development job of the Area Agent easier and more effective. Careful analysis of the potential for utilizing both county and area committee thinking, along with the ideas of the County and Area Agents in total programming, is important. There is certainiy room for looking at different procedures for putting program ideas into a workable and comprehensive industry package. Conversely, we should not discard the committee because of the complexities of working on an area basis, but rather we must take a look at ourselves and our expectations as well as the methods of really getting the job done with people.

A composte suggestion for an effective committee as gleaned from the many agents responding in the study, might be as follows:

Provide the framework for securing a committee representative of of the total industry and geographic area involved.

Keep the committee size to 15 or 20 persons.

Be sure to include two interested County Agents on the Area Committee.

Plan well and prepare extra well for committee meetings.

Hold committee meetings only when there is something worthwhile to do. Let Committee members know in advance what is expected on any given occasion.

Keep the number of committee meetings per year to a minimum . . . perhaps two.

Help committee members feel important . . . . that their contribution is valuable and needed.

Be certain that committee members know what is expected of them, where their responsibility begins, and what other influences play a part in total program determination.

Be a good listener. Hear what the committee has to say.

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